

The Times-Dispatch

DAILY—WEEKLY—SUNDAY

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WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 1910.

HOUSE BILL NO. 85.

When the superintendents of schools are selected last year a howl arose from some communities because local favorites were not designated. The term of their term of office is House Bill No. 85, which provides that no man shall be eligible as a superintendent unless he is a citizen and a qualified voter in the county or district over which he is to be appointed. This bill is thoroughly bad, and ought to be put to death without delay.

We ought all to get it into our heads, once and for ever, that the public school system of Virginia is a state system, supported by the State or the good of the State, and that if there is one thing more than another that it positively is not run for, it is to provide a fat appanage to local officials. The city and county schools are positively not run to furnish snags for homefolks who happen to have the necessary pull. There is only one thing that ought to be considered in the selection of school superintendents, and that is superior fitness for the extremely important work they have to do. This bill sets up a new and very different standard. Not merit, but the accident of residence, is made the prime test, though it should take a profound student to perceive that is merit alone, and not residence in the least, that makes the good officer, the proper way to choose a school superintendent is to get the man best qualified, giving the preference to a local candidate where two men seem equally equal. The method of choice which this bill lays down is to get a local man at all hazards, giving the preference to a well-qualified man if he is there. A fit local man if you can, but a local man anyway.

There is so much to be said against this wrong-headed proposal that one hesitates where to begin. It throws the school system back into the whirl of local politics and tends to attach superintendencies to the patronage of the county organization or the district Congressman. By deliberately using the door to new blood and fresh points of view, it develops exactly the kind of ingrowing education that the State desires to get away from. By making residence the test, it serves notice on every able and ambitious principal that there is no room for him unless the district which he happens to work should happen to need a new superintendent. One other district may sorely need and desire him as superintendent, but may not have him. Before the appointments last year, the school authorities of a number of cities and counties requested the State Board to send them a superintendent from outside. This bill would make it impossible for the board to listen to any request. It would force a local candidate on every community, no matter how the entire community strongly objected to such candidate. It strongly desired a superintendent from outside. The State gives large sums of money to William and Mary College, especially to train young men in leadership in public work, and is sitting splendidly returns for its investment. But this bill would make it impossible to promote these specially trained men to superintendencies, unless they happened to be qualified in counties or divisions where superintendents were to be appointed.

There is no more reason that local men alone should be eligible for superintendencies than that native Virginians alone should be eligible to superintend the University of Virginia. The essential badness of this bill is that it sets up and enforces a totally wrong standard for selecting State business of vital importance. The State Board now has the power to choose superintendents upon the basis of fitness only. There is by one test of whether this power is being wisely and fairly used, and that is the character of the men appointed under it. If the School Board is loading up superintendencies on the slate let us hear about it. If any community desires to make a complaint against the fitness of its superintendent, this paper will take pleasure in opening its columns to the charges. If these complaints are frequent and widespread, let us admit that the men on the present School Board are not fit to be trusted with important a power, and let us replace them with others more reliable. If, on the other hand, it appears that the School Board has appointed properly capable and well trained superintendents, who have improved educational conditions in their districts, and whose entire competency nobody in question, let us agree that there is no justification for trying to strangle their freedom of

choice and taking from them a power which they are using to the distinct advantage of the State.

WILL THE PANAMA CANAL PAY?
 Everybody has taken it for granted that the Panama Canal will pay. If it will not, why should we build it? Why should the government spend millions in digging dirt and blasting rock if American trade is not to be benefited, directly or indirectly? The people naturally supposed that the government knew what it was about. But now Admiral Robley D. Evans, of "Iowa" fame, is disputing the economy of the whole proposition, and is pleading for a free canal in a current magazine article. Admiral Evans has formed the habit of doubting since he has retired on full pay, but this fact should not discredit him. As a naval authority he should have a fair hearing.

His argument is simple enough. The amount of the shipping through the canal, he says, will obviously depend upon the government toll, upon the price of coal and upon the railroad rates of this country. The toll presumably is to be \$1 per gross ton, and must, under our treaties, be the same to all comers. The real question, therefore, will be whether the canal toll will be lower than the cost of coal on the old and longer routes, and whether low transcontinental railroad rates will not make it more profitable to follow the present method of shipment. Manifestly, if the toll is higher for shipping to the western coast of South America than the price of coal for a journey around the Horn, British shippers will follow the present routes. Also, if the Suez Canal will so reduce its rates on New Zealand trade that a merchant can profitably coal for the longer journey, he will not use the western route, via Panama. By the same reasoning, if the American railroads increase their charges for freight to the coast, and decrease their rates for transcontinental hauls, they may keep the present shipping to Pacific ports.

All of this reasoning is supported by figures, and is finished with a declaration, in "caps," that the tolls on the canal may not equal the annual cost of maintenance. This is very distressing. But neither Admiral Evans nor any other man can settle the question with pencil and paper in advance. Some ancient wisecracks will be remembered, proved conclusively that steamships could never economically operate across the Atlantic, while other wise men demonstrated beyond question that a locomotive line could not pay. The value of the canal will be demonstrated only when it is in operation. If the government finds that tolls are too high it can most surely lower them. If it finds land competition is ruining the usefulness of the canal, we imagine that it can adjust a new schedule of rates. When we get the canal we will know what to do with it.

GAGGING THE GAG.

Delegate Stearnes is leveling a body blow at all Thespians. We know not what his grievance is. Whether he has been the butt of some antique joke hurled over the footlights by the low comedian, or whether some surburban soubrette has sung to him from the apron, we do not know; but we do know well that comedians high and low and soubrettes young and old, from the up-State Maine regions to the stage-coach circuit in Arizona, will rise up and denounce him if his bill goes through. Prohibit actors from local digs? Prevent them under penalty of the law from their much cherished "topical allusions"? Gag the gag? It will be an outrage that every actor will resent as a taking away of his property without due process of law.

Evidently Mr. Stearnes has never been an actor. If he had he would view the matter differently. He has never come from behind the "tortmentor," looked on a half-filled house and sprung a few choice jokes that fell flatter than any pan-cake. Had he had this experience he would know what a bracing relief it is to cross to the third groove wing, ascertain from the waiting stage hand the name of some nearby dead town, and then spring something novel about a somebody's being as dead as the aforesaid town. He would appreciate the joy that comes into the actor's heart when some one, in that vague, dim audience beyond the lights' glare, begins to laugh. To take this gag right from the actor would be to pluck away his birthright, to steal the bread from his mouth. It would mean that many a comedian could never break the ice that covers a cold audience, could never make the bald-headed man's companion chortle between titters. "My, ain't he funny?"

Then, too, Mr. Stearnes's bill will hurt audience as much as actor. The crowd is always amused when the soubrette comes out, takes a hasty look at the audience and then sings audaciously to the fat man in the royal box. It may not be very good fun for the man, especially if his wife is sitting by him, but the audience all ways enjoys it. Every actor can attest that a crowd will enjoy even a feeble "roast" or some local celebrity as though it were the best joke invented since Aristophanes.

We anticipate a hard time for Mr. Stearnes. The Barnstormers' Union will certainly send its walking delegate to him, and the press agent of the comedy circuits will roast him unmercifully. Every actor who meets him on the street will glare at him as he glared upon the "heavy" in the last melodrama, and every comedienne will bestow upon him her stoniest glance. Mr. Stearnes had better repent before the vaudevillians fall upon him.

constitutional amendments now before that body they will show, in effect, whether or not they are willing to perpetuate in office the courthouse rings which desire to maintain a syndicate upon public office in Virginia.

This paper has had little to say about the amendments which lengthen the session of the Assembly and regulate the reading of bills. We have left these proposals to the judgment of the Assembly. If that body thinks the changes necessary, we shall not oppose them. But the third amendment we do oppose, as contrary to the best interests of the State, as contrary to the spirit of the Constitution and as perfecting a line of legislation that is neither fair, creditable nor just. We have frequently pointed out the fallacy of supposing that Democratic principles prescribe that commissioners and treasurers should be elected. We have shown that a semblance of popular election may become a mere cloak for inefficiency. In assessing and collecting taxes, the men in office cannot serve the interests of the whole State and of their own particular constituents at the same time. That is too obvious to require argument.

There is also another point. That is the manner in which the law on the subject has been juggled and the Constitution has been overridden. Nothing in the recent history of Virginia legislation is less creditable. The makers of the Constitution wisely prescribed that commissioners of the revenue could either be elected or appointed, but that if elected they should not be eligible for re-election. This was intended to remove the commissioner once and for all from party politics and to make him responsible only to the Auditor. The Assembly at once directed that commissioners should be elected, but later reconsidered this. Before the end of the election term came, the Assembly, in 1906, authorized the appointment of commissioners by the court, and, again, in 1908, once more changed the law so that the commissioners might be elected.

What was the purpose of this enactment and repeal, and re-enactment and rescindment? The answer is obvious; in no other way could the men whom the Constitution said should not be re-elected be kept in office, by changing the law, as the time of election approached, could the Assembly defeat the plain and obvious provisions of the Constitution. The end was accomplished. Men who were in office in 1903 are still able to draw their fees. If the present amendment is passed, these same officers can hold on indefinitely and can aid in perpetuating the county courthouse "rings."

Will the Senate of Virginia be a party to this transaction? Will it legalize a practical violation of the Constitution, amending the Constitution to get the violation? Will it give its approval to a measure whose chief effect will be to keep county politicians in office for an indefinite term?

Much violent derogation has been heaped upon the so-called divorce bill, but no derogator has gotten ahead of the Alexandria Gazette, which discovers that the proposed amendment would "make divorce in Virginia as easy as it is in South Dakota," and "turn the State into a wide-open divorce resort," as well as practically put a premium on marital unfaithfulness. Even more savage are the Gazette's remarks about our honorable Senate, which passed the bill and to which our Alexandria contemporary extends the following fierce alternative: "It is said, in excuse, that the bill was passed without the Senators knowing its full purport. If this is true they are a set of incompetents and cannot intelligently represent their constituents, but if it is not true and they willfully voted for such a measure they are knaves, and should be turned out." May not failure to catch the "full import of the bill" be as possible in the case of the Gazette as of the Senate? If the bill really turned Virginia into a "wide-open divorce resort," South Dakota style, there is not a reputable man or newspaper in the State that would not be ashamed to say a good word for it. Yet among yesterday's exchanges we find several of the ablest papers in Virginia approving it, or at least failing to find any horrors in it. The same condition exists in the Assembly, where many of the ablest members, men as moral in their standards as they are skillful in their interpretation of a law, approve this bill. Does the Gazette insist that all these men are either fools or knaves?

The Norfolk Virginian-Pilot remarks that "The Times-Dispatch seems to think it is an open question for debate what the Governor's attitude is towards the proposition to give the entire electorate a vote on State-wide prohibition." The esteemed Virginian-Pilot must have gotten its names mixed. The Times-Dispatch has not merely been absolutely clear as to Governor Mann's attitude on all phases of State-wide prohibition since his opening speech, as a candidate, last March, but happens to have raised the question which was said to have "forced" the Governor clearly to declare his position. So far from having any doubts as to where Governor Mann stands, this paper has more than once had the pleasure of setting others right upon the matter.

Mr. Ogden Armour complacently speaks of "the cheaper cuts." Cheaper than what, Mister?

There are chancellors here in Richmond, which, in point of faithful devotion to all-night work, could give Houston's cards and spades.

Heyburn, of Idaho, is at once the biggest and the smallest minority in the world.

Lent. While the little star-eyed blondes of Richmond are looking very demure and penitent-eyed this morning, there's a something in their eyes which suggests that they have not wholly forgotten how to smile.

We co-operate with the largest advertisers, and the best returns, Richmond Advertising Agency, Inc., Richmond, Virginia. Established 1904.

Major Hemphill, picturesque painter of main front of the editorial page of the Charleston News and Courier, is moving on to Richmond. And what will Charleston do then, poor thing? She will have to make do with another earthquake. Omaha Bee.

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Borrowed Jingles

JEWELS.
 Since prices of the stuff we are using every day.
 And things are rendered valuable by what we have to pay.
 When you have a jewel, meet your husband with a kiss.
 The conversation that ensues will follow lines like this:
 "I wore my diamond star today at Mrs. Gaby's." "How?"
 "But diamonds now you know are just as common as can be."
 "That is so, but I never made me feel quite poor, because she wore
 A string of turquoises round her neck that almost reached the floor."

"They say that Molly Macerick has hooked an old fellow named Chink."
 She sported on him, and a squall that made us stare and blink.
 I walked, dear hubby, coming home to save the last day of my life.
 And saw displayed at Biffan's a pendant something rare.
 The smoothly worked, made me feel quite poor, because she wore
 A string of turquoises round her neck that almost reached the floor."

"I never wanted anything so much in all my life.
 O, won't you buy it, darling love, to please your little wife?"
 —Minnie Irving, in New York Times.

MERELY JOKING.
 How Did He Know?
 Cincinnati Tourist (who, for the first time, has just entered a restaurant in Paris): "Have you ordered?"
 St. Louis Tourist (who has reached the table some minutes before, and who looks up from a French bill of fare): "Yes."
 Cincinnati Tourist: "What did you order?"
 St. Louis Tourist (impatiently): "How do I know?" —Chicago News.

Foolish, Foolish Questions.
 "Were you ever arrested before?" asked the magistrate, whose principal business is imposing fines for speeding.
 "What do you mean?" the man being doing all these years said the chauffeur, "pushing a wheelbarrow?" —Chicago Journal.

Had the Price.
 In vain they told the heiress that the duke was an impostor and worse.
 "Why?" said a friend, "read that Russian story you have been reading."
 But the heiress, all serene, only answered: "I have the price." —Young's Magazine.

A Bit Rusty.
 Reader: "Hello, Bill, how are you?"
 "Hello, Reader," said the man, "I've been taking big doses of iron lately."
 Reader: "Is that so? Well, I've been reading that your jokes were rather rusty for the past week, and wondered what was the matter?" —Judge.

He Knew His Not.
 Tourist: "Do you know whether I'm right for Stratford-on-Avon?"
 Rustic (sneeringly): "Stratford-on-Avon? That's the country, you know Shakespeare's country. You know Shakespeare?"
 Rustic (brightening): "Yes, he was he?" —Tit-Bits.

WISDOM IN SMALL DOSES.
 WE have never pretended to be a matrimonial agency.
 Russell will have Houston eliminated from her list of one-night stands and placed in the solid world so she will be the heroine in one of Houston's world-famous wedding. —Houston Post.

A Southern paper tells us that "there are worse men in the world than Cannon." We have to look to the North for sensational novelties these days. —Cleveland Leader.

If an expedition is going to discover the South Pole, let the polar zone be picked to provide against such a contingency as another Cook episode. —Louisville Courier-Journal.

A course in writing poetry is announced in the University of Chicago. So far as we know, the death penalty has not been abolished in that state. —Philadelphia Press.

When Senator Ekins denounces Senator Aldrich, and declares himself to be a peer insurgent, the gallery wakes up and exclaims: "Something is doing." —Philadelphia Ledger.

Hereditary tendencies are dangerous. Mr. Hain has failed in the packing business because he broadened out too fast. —Brooklyn Eagle.

HARD ON CHARLESTON.
 Editors Inquiry: How City Will Survive
 What Bailey has been to Houston, Major J. C. Hemphill has been to Charleston. Had it not been for the fact that he is a gentleman, he would have attracted very much notice. For over twenty years Major Hemphill has been a household name in Charleston, with all its defects and imperfections, to the gaze of the universe, and his devotion might be likened unto that of a love-blinded mother to her lame and decrepit and be-freckled babe.

"The City by the Sea," bereft of its herald, will, of course, vanish into the mists of obscurity.

Announcement carried in yesterday's News that Major Hemphill had decided to shed the burden of conquest came as a distinct surprise. Had the major chosen some North Carolina town as his headquarters, or some remote spot in the changed into admiration—but Virginia!

One thing may be said, however: it is impossible to keep a good man down, and no better word wielded a pen than the ocean of the school, the distinguished discoverer of Charleston.

Major Hemphill is a man of great value, and we offer congratulations to the Times-Dispatch, the new field of mental gymnastics of the hero of this battle, the shadow never grows less. —Charlotte News.

It was announced from Richmond yesterday that Major J. C. Hemphill, for the past twenty years editor of the News and Courier, is to take editorial control of The Richmond Times-Dispatch, the leading paper in Richmond. The news comes as a surprise and also as somewhat of a shock, especially to the editorial folks of the News and Courier, who have been regarded as one of the ablest newspaper writers of the South. If not the best, but nobody has been able to think of him except in connection with the News and Courier, and the idea of giving him up to go to far away Charleston is not altogether pleasant. However, there is lots of good work in this most excellent gentleman, and the Richmond paper has made a good move in securing his services. —Yorkville (S. C.) Enquirer.

The announcement that Major J. C. Hemphill, editor of the Charleston News and Courier, is to become editor of The Times-Dispatch of Richmond, is a good move, and it is a pity that Hemphill is so much a part of Charleston that it is hard to imagine him anywhere else. He has been editor of the News and Courier for twenty years, and has made it one of the best known as well as one of the ablest papers in the South. It is a great newspaper, and it was much of its greatness to Major Hemphill. The Times-Dispatch made a good move when it secured the distinguished South Carolina editor. —Richmond Times.

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SNEEZE IN YOUR PERE IN GERMANY

Emperor William Also Forbids Whistling and Unseemly Noises in Streets.

TURKISH FIRE DEPARTMENT

Austrian Count Has Introduced American Fire Fighting Methods in Constantinople.

BY LA MARQUISE DE FONTENAY.
 In connection with the arrival in the city of Constantinople of the Hungarian nobleman, Count Laslo Szechenyi, it may be mentioned that his cousin, old Count Edmund Szechenyi, has just been playing a very remarkable role at Constantinople, in connection with the destruction by fire of the Palace of Chiragan. In 1876 the scene of the suicide or murder of Sultan Abdul Aziz, it had been for the last ten months the home of the Ottoman Parliament. Count Edmund Szechenyi, although now an old man, still remains the head of the Constantinople fire department, which he created, and it is thanks to him that the entire Turkish capital is not periodically reduced to ashes, through the fire which are constantly being caused by the proverbial carelessness and inattention of the Orientals.

The count, who holds the rank of general, the Ottoman army, and of principal aide-de-camp of the Sultan, first achieved prominence by navigating a little steam yacht on the Bosphorus, and through the Main, Rhine, Danube and Seine, to Paris, which he reached in time for the international exhibition of 1889. He has since then frequently visited him on board his pretty boat, as it lay moored off the Quai des Invalides. Subsequently he was attached to the Turkish army in Constantinople, and was led by some rather conspicuous feats of bravery which he performed in saving a big ship from destruction, to turn his attention to the means at that time available in the Ottoman metropolis for the fighting of fires.

Leaving from the diplomatic service, he took himself in the first place to this country, which even in those days had achieved world-wide fame in connection with the numerous fire departments, and spent a considerable time in touring through the United States, for the purpose of studying the various means used here for quenching fires. Afterwards he spent a year in London as a volunteer fireman, under the orders of Captain Sir Eyre Sisk, then chief of the London Fire Brigade, and thereupon he took himself to Constantinople, where he laid before Sultan Abdul Aziz his scheme for the creation of a Turkish Fire Department, on American and English lines. The Sultan not only fully approved of the project, but likewise gave him the money required for its execution to be placed at his disposal, and in spite of all the changes and vicissitudes which have succeeded one another, the project has not been abandoned, and the Turkish Fire Department, the Sultan not only fully approved of the project, but likewise gave him the money required for its execution to be placed at his disposal, and in spite of all the changes and vicissitudes which have succeeded one another, the project has not been abandoned, and the Turkish Fire Department, the Sultan not only fully approved of the project, but likewise gave him the money required for its execution to be placed at his disposal, and in spite of all the changes and vicissitudes which have succeeded one another, the project has not been abandoned, and the Turkish Fire Department, the Sultan not only fully approved of the project, but likewise gave him the money required for its execution to be placed 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